

Reconstructing the Life of Uesugi Kiyoko

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Uesugi Kiyoko (1270–1342) was the mother of the founder of the Ashikaga shogunate, Takauji (1305–1358), and his brother and chief administrator, Tadayoshi (1306–1352). Although Kiyoko lived within the vortex of a new political order that was being formed by her politically important sons in the early decades of the fourteenth century, little is known about her. Hers is a story not easily told: because information about her is so fragmentary, no monograph or even a single article in English or Japanese has been published about her life. In this essay, I seek to reconstruct the life of Uesugi Kiyoko through an examination of written records by contemporary diarists, personal letters, and poetry written by Kiyoko herself, and a number of physical sites relating to her life. The result is a nuanced picture of an educated woman who wrote letters and poetry, wielded significant land stipends in her own interests, and helped her two sons work together for political gain.

Keywords: Uesugi Kiyoko, Ashikaga Sadauji, Ashikaga Takauji, Ashikaga Tadayoshi, Kōfukuji, Kokawadera, Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine, Tōjiin, *Fūgashū*, Jōmyōji dono, Tōjiin dono, Kashōin dono

Introduction

“Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. . . . Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands.”¹

This well-known quotation from Jane Austen’s early-nineteenth century novel *Persuasion* recognizes that historically women have had little control over how they have been remembered because men do most of the writing. Uesugi Kiyoko 上杉清子 (1270–1342), the mother of both the founder of the Ashikaga 足利 shogunate, Takauji 尊氏 (1305–1358), and his brother and chief administrator, Tadayoshi 直義 (1306–1352), would likely concur. Very little is known about Kiyoko even though she lived within the vortex of a new political order that was being formed by her two sons in the early decades of the fourteenth century. In spite of her having such politically important sons, no monograph or even a single article in English or Japanese has been written about Kiyoko’s life, probably because her story is not

1 Austen 2006, p. 1221.

easily told. Some facts can be culled from records written by male priests and courtiers who were firsthand observers of the political and religious turmoil surrounding her sons; others can be gleaned from personal letters and poetry that Kiyoko herself wrote, and additional evidence can be acquired from a few physical sites still preserved in her natal homeland of Uesugi 上杉 in Tanba 丹波. Although the information is fragmentary, confirming the significant challenges scholars still face in writing women's histories today, it provides a picture of this woman that history has forgotten.

It is my intent to construct, to the extent possible, a biography of Uesugi Kiyoko. In early medieval Japan even the basic facts about where a person was born, lived, and died were generally recorded only for those who attained positions of social and political prominence, and most of them were men. Even prominent male figures such as Ashikaga Takauji remain understudied, and their precise whereabouts and daily lives are difficult to pinpoint.² The task of writing about Kiyoko is made even more difficult because medieval women were seldom identified by name in historical records, being most often referred to as "the daughter or wife of so-and-so." In general, women's names are found in historical records only if they produced letters, literature, or art that managed to survive the test of time, or if they bore male children who became sovereigns or held important government offices, and Kiyoko did both.

Nonetheless, seeking to discover information about Uesugi Kiyoko clearly presents unique problems. Few physical traces of her remain; the buildings in which she lived, gave birth, and died have long since decayed and vanished. Written sources are often equally difficult to mine because so little remains and so much must be inferred or assumed. Indeed, Japanese sources tend to be ambiguous about what women were doing and where they lived. Unless a source specifically states the location or name of the residence of a particular woman, we can only attempt to tease out tentative answers about her whereabouts based on information about her natal family, husband, or male children. Discovering where a woman died and was buried can be determined more readily because things of a more permanent nature often remain, such as stone grave markers and donation records in Buddhist temples. Examining material objects, alongside records, personal letters, and poetry written during her lifetime offers our best bet of uncovering the pieces of Kiyoko's identity. Memorial portraits and posthumous names can be used to connect her to specific individuals and sites and cement important connections in the afterlife in a way that effectively constructs a posthumous identity. Unfortunately, no known portrait of Kiyoko exists, but her posthumous names solidify her standing as the "founding mother" of the Ashikaga line, a position that grew exponentially in importance as the years passed and the regime became more established and powerful. I utilize all of the above types of sources to help me reconstruct the life of Uesugi Kiyoko and her position as the mother of the founder of a new political dynasty.

Kiyoko's Early Years in Tanba

Kiyoko was born into the main branch of the Uesugi house in 1270. As was typical for most people at this time, her birth date was not recorded, but her death date and age at

² See, for example, Matthew Stavros's (2010, p. 3) comments on his efforts to uncover where Takauji and Tadayoshi lived in Kyoto in the early fourteenth century.

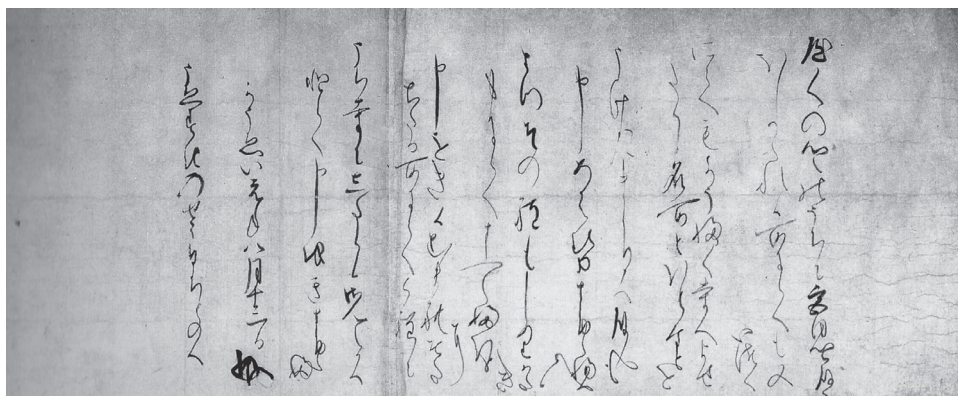


Figure 1. Letter written by Uesugi Kiyoko, dated Kōei 1 (1342).8.13, *Ankoku monjo*. Reproduced in Uejima 2001, vol. 2, pp. 60–61. http://ayabe.city-news.jp/04fmwalk/04fmwalk_3.htm.

death were, allowing us to extrapolate the year of her birth. The Uesugi were a noble family descended from Fujiwara Yoshikado 藤原良門 (n.d.) of the northern branch (Kajūji 勧修寺) of the Fujiwara, and Kiyoko's father was Uesugi Yorishige 上杉頼重 (n.d.). The Uesugi became close allies of the Ashikaga in the mid-thirteenth century when Kajūji (Fujiwara) Shigefusa 勧修寺重房 (n.d.), Kiyoko's grandfather, accompanied Prince Munetaka 宗尊親王 (1242–1274) to Kamakura, where Munetaka assumed the position of shogun in the Kamakura government in 1252 and Shigefusa became the governor of the province of Tanba, Ikaruga 斑鳩 District, in Uesugi domain (today, Kyoto Prefecture, Ayabe 綾部 City, Uesugi Town). He later changed his family name to that of his domain, Uesugi. When a daughter of Shigefusa (name not recorded) married Ashikaga Yoriuji 足利頼氏 (1240–1262), then head of the main Ashikaga house, that union provided the Ashikaga with an important link to Kyoto culture and instituted a tradition of marriage between the two families. A generation later, Ashikaga Sadauji 足利貞氏 (1273–1331) continued this tradition, marrying Uesugi Kiyoko.

There is little agreement among scholars on where Kiyoko was born and lived as a child, or about whether ties with her family were a boon to the Ashikaga. Some scholars claim that Kiyoko was born and grew up in the Uesugi domain in Tanba.³ Others disagree, pointing out that the heads of the main Uesugi branch had been living and working in Kamakura since Shigefusa's arrival fifty years before; these scholars contend that Kiyoko was born in Kamakura.⁴ We know, however, that Kiyoko's father, Yorishige, held a court post in Kyoto, serving Eianmon'in 永安門院 (1216–1279), Emperor Juntoku's 順徳天皇 (1197–1242) eldest daughter, as chamberlain (*kurōdo* 藏人) of her Nyoin Palace 女院御所.⁵ Furthermore, Kiyoko herself says she was born and brought up in Tanba in a letter dated

3 See, for example, Amino 1998 and the entry for “Uesugi Kiyoko” in *Asahi Nihon rekishi jinbutsu jiten* (online), which says that Kiyoko grew up in Uesugi. Note that all sources designated “online” were accessed through Japan Knowledge.

4 See Minegishi 2011, p. 5.

5 According to *Uesugi keizu* 上杉系図, Yorishige served as Shōanmon'in Kurōdo 承安門院藏人; *DNS* 6:7, p. 472.

Kōei 光榮 1 (1342).8.13. This should put to rest further speculation about her place of birth (see Figure 1).⁶

Kiyoko became Sadauji's wife sometime in the late thirteenth century. As marriages were private and seldom recorded, we do not know the exact year, but the couple's first son, Takauji, was born in 1305, when Kiyoko was thirty-six years old; a second son, Tadayoshi, was born two years later.⁷ Kiyoko was designated a secondary wife (*sokushitsu* 側室) because a long tradition dating back to the twelfth century stipulated that the head of the Ashikaga house should take a woman from the main Hōjō 北条 line as his primary wife (*seishitsu* 正室).⁸ Thus, by the time he married Kiyoko, Sadauji already had a primary wife, the daughter (name unknown) of Kanesawa (Hōjō) Akitoki 金沢顯時 (1248–1301), a woman referred to in texts only as Shakadō dono 釈迦堂殿 (n.d.). Little other information about her survives.

Officially recognized marriages such as these were intended to produce heirs, thereby cementing important political and social alliances among the military or with prestigious court families. When a woman failed to produce a viable heir, even if she held the elevated position of primary wife, history generally failed to remember her; such was the fate of Shakadō dono. The exceptions in this time period include a handful of noble women who documented their own lives, such as the nuns Eshin 恵信 (1182–1268?), Abutsu 阿仏 (1225–1283), and Hino Meishi 日野名子 (d. 1358), a contemporary of Kiyoko.⁹ For the most part, however, those who left records from the early fourteenth century were men: Buddhist monks and court nobles who recorded occurrences of importance, such as ritual procedures, political events, and the deaths of high-ranking individuals. When these writers included information about women who were unrelated to them, such as Kiyoko, it is an indicator of the latter's high level of social and political importance.

The Birth of An Heir

While we might expect that everything about the birth of Takauji, the man who became the founder of a two-hundred-year dynasty of shoguns, would be carefully documented, in fact, records are surprisingly unhelpful about his early life because Takauji was not intended to be his father's heir. Although seldom discussed in English-language scholarship, Sadauji and his primary wife, Shakadō dono, had a son, Takayoshi 高義 (1297–1317), who was born

6 All dates given year/month/day are cited from primary sources that use the lunar calendar. DNS 6:7, p. 300. Kiyoko's letter is reproduced in Uejima 2001, vol. 2, pp. 60–61; see also http://ayabe.city-news.jp/04fmwalk/04fmwalk_3.htm and the entry for "Imanishi Nakamura" in *Nihon rekishi chimei taikai* (online). I would like to thank Thomas Conlan for pointing me to the letter and also for his generous comments and suggestions that helped shape my thinking about Kiyoko and Takauji.

7 Matsuzaki Yōji (1990, p. 47) gives Takauji's birth date as 1303. I use the more commonly accepted date of 1305. Tadayoshi's birth date is usually given as Tokuji 徳治 1 (1306), but new research based on *Kenshun sōjō nikki* suggests he was born in Tokuji 2 (1307), making him two years younger than Takauji (Shimizu 2013, p. 22). All ages in this essay are given in Japanese calculations, which add one year to Western calculations.

8 I use the term "secondary wife" to refer to a woman who is from an important family in a legally binding relationship that cannot be easily set aside, although her status is generally lower than that of the primary wife. In addition to primary and secondary wives (*seishitsu* and *sokushitsu*), men also had concubines, *mekake* 妾, who generally did not have the same rights. Sadauji's father had also married a Hōjō woman; Sadauji's mother was the daughter of the Rokuhara Tandai 六波羅探題, Hōjō Tokishige 北条時茂 (1240–1270).

9 For Eshin, see Dobbins 2004; for Abutsu, see Laffin 2013; for Meishi, see Tonomura 1997.

several years before Takauji and named as Sadauji's rightful heir.¹⁰ The existence of this elder child, born to a wife of higher status than Kiyoko, meant that Takauji's birth received little attention because he was not, at the time, expected to hold any position of importance. All this would change dramatically in 1317 when Takayoshi died suddenly at the young age of twenty-one.¹¹

To date, there has been little research into where Kiyoko lived during her marriage and much speculation about where her two sons with Sadauji were born. A closer examination of her living situation can, however, enlighten us about warrior marriages in the early-fourteenth century and also offer a deeper context for her sons' later alliances and actions.

In the early years of the fourteenth century, when Uesugi Kiyoko gave birth, her natal family held significant property in Tanba, north of Kyoto. The ancestral landholdings of the main house of the Ashikaga, however, were located in Shimotsuke 下野, in Tochigi prefecture, north of modern-day Tokyo. Sadauji's primary wife, Shakadō dono, and her natal Hōjō family lived in Kamakura, and Sadauji held positions in the Kamakura government as both houseman (*gokenin* 御家人) and the provincial governor of Kazusa 上総 (in Mikawa 三河).¹² It is conceivable, then, that Takauji and Tadayoshi were born either in their mother's homeland of Tanba, in the Ashikaga homeland of Shimotsuke, or in Kamakura, the center of the Hōjō government. Sadauji's first son by Shakadō dono, the unfortunate Takayoshi, was assuredly born in Kamakura, but there has been little evidence to date to support any one of these locations over another and little consensus among scholars on Takauji's place of birth. Some think it likely that Sadauji and both of his wives were living in Kamakura when his sons were born.¹³ Support for this theory rests on Sadauji holding positions in the shogunal government in Kamakura and on the fact that his primary wife, Shakadō-dono, resided there, making it likely that Sadauji lived in Kamakura as well.¹⁴ The theory that Takauji was born in the Ashikaga homeland seems to rest largely on Takauji's award in 1339 to the temple Bannaji 鑾阿寺 of land rights to Nakayama village in Shimotsuke, an act that has been construed as gratitude to the temple as his place of birth. Recent popular accounts based on *Taiheiki* seem to have solidified this notion by naming Bannaji as Takauji's birthplace and pointing out that the temple sits on the site of the original Ashikaga clan residence.¹⁵ There is no other evidence that Kiyoko gave birth there.

10 According to Shimizu (2013, pp. 20–23), Sadauji was thirty-three when he “retired,” took Buddhist vows, and designated Takayoshi as his heir.

11 At the time of his death, Takayoshi had two young sons. It is unclear why the eldest was not named to succeed Sadauji, but Shimizu (2013, p. 27) has suggested that it was because their mother was from the main Hōjō line and problems between the Ashikaga and Hōjō were already beginning to surface by this date.

12 Sadauji held the title of Sanuki no kami 讃岐守 with court rank of senior fifth, lower grade. *Nihonshi daijiten*, vol. 1, p. 124.

13 Shimizu 2013, p. 20. Minegishi Sumio (2011, p. 1) also believes that Takauji was born in Kamakura at the Ōkura 大倉 residence. These scholars are following claims made in Ashikaga city histories, such as *Ashikaga-shi shi* (1928–1929) and *Kindai Ashikaga-shi shi* (1975–1979).

14 Shakadō dono also founded a *bodaiji* (family memorial chapel), Enpukuji 延福寺, for her deceased son at Jōmyōji 浄妙寺.

15 See, for example, a novel by Yoshikawa 1959. Also Uejima 2001, vol. 2, pp. 482–83.



Figure 2 (left). Well of Takauji's birth water. Ankokuji (Kōfukuji), Ayabe City. Photo by T. Masuzaki. <http://www.ayabun.net/bunkazai/annai/ankoku/ankokuji.htm>.

Figure 3 (right). Stone marking Takauji's place of birth. Ankokuji (Kōfukuji), Ayabe City. Photo by T. Masuzaki. <http://www.ayabun.net/bunkazai/annai/ankoku/ankokuji.htm>.

Other historians have suggested that Kiyoko's two sons were born at Jōkōji 常光寺, a subtemple of Kōfukuji 光福寺 (Ankokuji 安国寺) located within the Uesugi domain.¹⁶ There is some physical evidence to support this theory. A water well is identified today as “the well of Takauji's birth water,” marking the spot where water was said to have been drawn for his birth, and a stone marker designates where the birth took place (see figures 2 and 3). Takauji's “birth hair” and “birth clothes” are still preserved at this temple today.¹⁷ Although Tanba was the homeland of the Uesugi, it should be noted that the Ashikaga also held land rights there to the nearby villages of Ayabe and Yata. Thus, if Kiyoko gave birth in Tanba, the site would have been closely connected to both the Uesugi and the Ashikaga.¹⁸

Other evidence suggesting that Kiyoko may have resided in Tanba at the time of Takauji's birth are two petitions (*ganmon* 願文) that she dedicated as prayers for a safe birth. Tanba's Kōfukuji claims that Kiyoko dedicated prayers for the safe delivery of an heir to its special Jizō Bosatsu (Koyasu Jizō 子安地藏), said to have been carved for that

16 Kōfukuji was later renamed Ankokuji, but as there are many temples named Ankokuji, I will refer to the temple in Tanba as Kōfukuji throughout. Jōkōji no longer exists. Matsuzaki (1990, p. 47) claims that when Kiyoko was pregnant, Sadauji was in Kyoto serving as the Kyoto *rokuhara tandai* (shogunal deputy). While Sadauji's mother was the daughter of Hōjō Tokishige, who was the (northern) *rokuhara tandai*, there is no evidence that Sadauji held this position.

17 *Inryōken nichiroku*, entry for Chōroku 2 (1458).10.24 says that Ashikaga Yoshimasa went to worship at Ankokuji and to view Takauji's “hair remains” (*ihatsu* 遺髪) and a “bowing cloth” (*kesa zagu* 袈裟座具). *Inryōken nichiroku*, vol. 133, p. 192; also *DNS* 7:908, p. 86. Usually made of pieces of silk sewn together, the cloth was carried by priests, who spread it out in front of them when making ceremonial bows. I am grateful to Patricia Fister for pointing me to this information. Uejima (2001, vol. 1, p. 484) interprets these phrases as Takauji's baby hair (*ubuge* 産毛) and clothes (*ubugi* 産着).

18 Uejima 2001, vol. 1, p. 484.

purpose centuries earlier by the monk Genshin 源信.¹⁹ Kōfukuji's claim is supported by Kiyoko's later donation to it of land stipends, which were made out of gratitude for the safe delivery of her son, and by her designating the temple as an Uesugi *ujidera* 氏寺.²⁰ Another petition, addressed to the famous Thousand-Armed Kannon at Kokawadera 粉河寺 in Kii (Wakayama Prefecture), tells us that for seven days in the autumn of Kagen 嘉元 3 (1305), Kiyoko underwent purifications and made fervent prayers for the safe birth of a male child.²¹ Many years later, in 1336, in gratitude for the birth of this son, she donated curtains (*tochō* 戸帳) (probably altar curtains) to the temple, along with the income from several parcels of land.²²

It is likely that Kiyoko presented petitions to these temples because they were located nearby and because their icons were known to aid in safe births, which would have been a major concern for Kiyoko, who was thirty-six years old in 1305. The Jizō image at Kōfukuji had been made specifically for the purpose of promoting safe births and the temple was located in the Uesugi domain, so if she were living there, it would have been a logical place to make such a request. While the Kannon image at Kokawadera did not seem to have had any particular reputation for safe childbirth at this time, by the early fourteenth century its Thousand-Armed Kannon, a bodhisattva of mercy who aided and comforted those in need, particularly women, was well known for its miraculous powers.²³ Kiyoko likely sent her petition to the temple via an attendant or family member who presented it on her behalf.²⁴

The petitions Kiyoko made to these two temples do not definitively prove that she was in Tanba when she gave birth to Takauji and Tadayoshi, but their proximity makes it probable. Taken together, the long travel that would have been required from Kamakura to either temple, the lack of any evidence that she gave birth in Kamakura or Shimotsuke, and the physical evidence preserved in the Uesugi domain, give considerable weight to the likelihood that her sons were born in Tanba and that Kiyoko probably continued to live there until Sadauji's original heir died in 1317 and Takauji was designated to succeed his father. At that point, Kiyoko may have moved to Kamakura to oversee her sons' progress and Takauji's coming-of-age ceremony in the tenth month of 1319, when he was presented with the court title of Senior Minister in the Ministry of Civil Affairs (*jibu no taifu* 治部

19 Genshin (942–1017) is also called Eishin Sōzu 恵心僧都; Matsuzaki 1990, p. 48.

20 Ryakuō 2 (1339).10.15 in *DNS* 6:5, p. 763; Kōei 1 (1342).8.13 in *DNS* 6:7, pp. 299–300.

21 The event is recorded in several sources (*DNS* 6:3, pp. 848–51), but I have not found any evidence that her petition still exists. See also Matsuzaki 1990, p. 48, and *Asahi Nihon rekishi jinbutsu jiten* (online). This Kannon is a powerful “hidden” image, said to have been made in 770 by Ōtomo no Kujiko 大伴孔子古. I could find no images of it other than those in *Kokawadera engi* at the Kyoto National Museum.

22 Kenmu 建武 3/Engen 延元 1 (1336).10 in *DNS* 6:3, pp. 848–51. The text is not clear about whether Kiyoko donated money for altar curtains or actual curtains. I am grateful to Naoko Gunji for her suggestions on translation.

23 Kokawadera remains part of the Saikoku pilgrimage circuit of thirty-three Kannon temples today. The illustrated handscroll, the *Kokawadera engi e* (late-twelfth or early-thirteenth century), documents the miraculous appearance of this Kannon image at the temple.

24 Kiyoko's successful petition started a tradition that was followed by a number of later Ashikaga shoguns. Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 義満 (1358–1408) traveled there in Meitoku 明德 3 (1392).5.7 and again on 10.3 of the same year, and his second son, Yoshinori (1394–1441), who would become the sixth Ashikaga shogun, was born in 1394, a little over a year after his second visit (*DNS* 6:907, pp. 209, 213). After Yoshinori became shogun, he also went to Kokawadera (Eikyō 永享 3 [1431].10.28) to offer prayers to its famous Kannon and to entreat the deity to grant him an heir (*DNS* 7:907, p. 595). His wish was granted when a shogunal successor, Yoshikatsu (1434–1443), was born.

大輔), with junior fifth rank, lower grade (*jūgoi no ge* 従五位下).²⁵ Alternatively, she may have remained in Tanba and entrusted their upbringing to others in Kamakura. There is no information about Kiyoko in any record until Sadauji dies in 1331.

Kiyoko After 1331

When Sadauji died, Kiyoko's life must have changed radically. It was also in 1331 that Go-Daigo's plots against the Hōjō came to light and Kiyoko's son, Takauji, was ordered to join Hōjō Takatoki's 北条高時 (1303-1333) army in the Kinai region to quell the anti-bakufu uprising (Genkō incident 元弘の乱). Thereafter, he became involved in numerous military skirmishes in both the Kyoto area and around Kamakura.²⁶ We have little documentation about Kiyoko's whereabouts at this time. Although we have no proof, Sadauji's death and the destabilization of the Kamakura government may have encouraged Kiyoko to return to Tanba, as the area had much to recommend it during these tumultuous times. It was geographically closer to Kyoto, where both of her sons were increasingly embroiled in military campaigns and where they would soon establish new residences. That Tanba was also convenient and familiar to Takauji is evident in his 1333 attack on the Hōjō stronghold of Rokuhara in Kyoto, which he launched from Tanba on the twenty-seventh day of the fourth month.²⁷ Above all, perhaps, Tanba was decidedly safer for Kiyoko than either Kamakura or Kyoto in the 1330s.²⁸ There is also evidence that Takauji visited Tanba regularly between 1333 and 1336 (in Shōkyō 正慶 2 [1333].4.27, Kenmu 建武 1 [1334].4.10) and even stayed there for some time (Engen 延元 1 [1336] from 1.27 to 2.3).²⁹

After Go-Daigo had returned from exile to the capital and instituted his reform measures in 1336, Takauji put his seven-year-old son, Yoshiakira, nominally in charge of Kamakura as he and his allies attempted to retake Kyoto from the emperor. By the end of the decade, both of Kiyoko's sons had residences in Kyoto and the records we have of her put Kiyoko there as well. At some time after 1339, Kiyoko took Buddhist vows with Kosen Ingen 古先印元 (1295–1374), a Rinzaï Zen monk, who had recently arrived in the capital to open Tōjiin 等持院 (1339).³⁰ While many medieval women took the tonsure and entered Buddhist temples after the death of their husbands, there is no record of Kiyoko doing either after Sadauji died. Her vows, whatever they entailed, may have been taken because of her age; she would have been around seventy years old by this time.

Another example of Kiyoko's activities in the capital is recorded for the sixth month of 1340 (Ryakuō 暦応 3) when she visited Senseimon-in 宣政門院 (1315–1362), Go-Daigo's 後醍醐 daughter and Kōgon's 光嚴 consort, at the Jimyō-in residence 持明院 of the retired sovereign of the Northern court. Senseimon-in had taken the tonsure on 5.29, probably

25 Gen'ō 元応 1 (1319).10.10, *Sonpi bunmyaku*, in *DNS* 5:905, p. 648.

26 Genkō 元弘 1 (1331).9.26–11.5 in *DNS* 5:905, pp. 763–66.

27 Shōkyō 正慶 2 (1333).4.27 in *DNS* 5:905, p. 787.

28 Matsuzaki (1990, p. 48) has also proposed that Takauji's wife, Nariko, took shelter at the Uesugi residence during the upheavals.

29 Shōkyō 2 (1333).4.27 in *DNS* 5:905, p. 787; Kenmu 1 (1334).4.10 in *DNS* 6:1, p. 516; Engen 1 (1336).1.27 to 2.3 in *DNS* 6:3, p. 16 and *DNS* 6:3, p. 56.

30 See the entry for "Uesugi Kiyoko" in *Kokushi daijiten* (online). Kosen was close to Musō Soseki 夢窓疎石 (1275–1351) and both Takauji and Tadayoshi. *DNS* 6:5, pp. 598–99. Typically one's Buddhist name was taken from the temple where the vows or tonsure were performed. Kiyoko later received the posthumous name of Tōjiin dono 等持院殿.

in response to Go-Daigo's death the previous year. After receiving visits from several women, including Kiyoko, Senseimon-in entered Hoanji 保安寺 and took up a new life as a Buddhist nun.³¹ Kiyoko's relationship with Senseimon-in is intriguing and one wonders how it might have come about, as Takauji and Kōgon did not enjoy a particularly close relationship at this date. She may have become acquainted with Senseimon-in and Kōgon through a mutual interest in poetry. Nonetheless, these events—taking Buddhist vows with Kosen Ingen and visiting Senseimon-in—help us envision the types of activities Kiyoko enjoyed during the last years of her life. Whether she was still living in Tanba or had moved to Kyoto during that time is not known, but it is likely she was living with one or the other of her sons in the late 1330s.

Kiyoko's Poetry and Letters

As a daughter of a noble family who grew up near the capital, Kiyoko was trained in the arts, most notably writing and poetry. Education for their children was highly valued by such families living in the provinces, as it enabled them to distinguish themselves from the “warrior other” and maintain cultural ties with Kyoto. By all accounts, Kiyoko became an accomplished poet. Her name appears in the 1337 waka poetry index, *Waka sakusha burui* 倭歌作者部類, as having attained the highest level of poetic accomplishment, and her poems were apparently of such quality that they were included posthumously in an imperial anthology, *Fūgashū* 風雅集, commissioned by the retired emperor Kōgon (1313–1364) and published between 1346 and 1349. Kiyoko has a single poem in the volume, while Takauji contributed sixteen, the same number as the venerable courtier Saionji Sanekane 西園寺実兼 (1249–1322), who had close personal and marriage ties to both imperial lines.³² *Fūgashū* had the distinction of being the first imperial anthology that required vetting by a warrior government.³³ This unprecedented requirement provides evidence of the weakness of the imperial family vis-à-vis the Ashikaga and their need for Ashikaga economic support in the mid-fourteenth century, but it also highlights the desire of the Ashikaga to appropriate the poetic cultural capital of the court.³⁴

The official wives of the early Ashikaga shoguns did not keep daily records and, in general, left few personal correspondences. But as the daughter of a noble family, Kiyoko wrote a number of letters that have been preserved. The earliest, dated Kenmu 5 (1338).5.27, provides a rare example of a woman's perspective of a battle. The letter places her at an important battle near Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine 石清水八幡宮, about twelve miles south of Kyoto on Otokoyama 男山, where Kitabatake Chikafusa's 北畠親房 son, Akiie 顕家 (1318–1338), a Southern court commander and one of Takauji's most formidable rivals, was

31 *Moromoriki* 師守記 in *DNS* 6:6, p. 172. Senseimon-in was the royal princess Kanshi Naishinnō 権子内親王, daughter of Go-Daigo's first queen consort, Saionji Kishi 西園寺禪子. Hoanji no longer exists, but was located in the Fushimi area south of Kyoto.

32 *DNS* 6:7, p. 472. Kiyoko's poem is number 1602 (1601) in Takizawa 1991, p. 121.

33 The emperor was required to ask permission of the Ashikaga before going forward with the anthology. See Huey 1997, pp. 186–87.

34 Takauji made other attempts to control court culture. In 1356, for example, he initiated what would become the *Shinsen'ai wakashū* 新千載和歌集 (1359) anthology by “directing” Emperor Go-Kōgon to order its commission. Huey 1997, pp. 187–89.

killed by the forces led by Kō Moronao 高師直 (d. 1351).³⁵ Kiyoko's letter vividly describes how the gods Hachiman and Sumiyoshi helped determine the outcome by miraculously appearing on the battlefield, and also reports that six ships were burned and sunk. Although it is not clear whether she witnessed these events herself or heard about them from someone who did, she writes in great detail, naming people and places.³⁶ Other contemporary sources corroborate that Kiyoko witnessed Akiie's defeat in the fierce battle and even gloated over his death.³⁷ Her personal account radically alters our perceptions of medieval women and their involvement in military affairs. The letter, probably sent to one of her sons, served as a battle report, and demonstrates that Kiyoko's judgment was valued, and that at sixty-nine years of age, she was both active and involved in the ongoing power struggles taking place around her.

Two other handwritten letters by Kiyoko are preserved in *Ankokuji monjo* 安国寺文書; both are related to land stipends that were donated to Kōfukuji in Tanba.³⁸ In the first letter, dated 1339 (Ryakuō 2.10.15), a year after Takauji became *seiitai shōgun*, Kiyoko conveyed the ownership rights of Hinayashiki 日名屋敷 in Mikawa Province (Aichi Prefecture) to the temple. Hinayashiki had been Kiyoko's father's residence when he was provincial governor of Mikawa, and the site also had deep connections to the Ashikaga clan in the Kamakura period. Kiyoko inherited it from her family and perhaps offered it to Kōfukuji in gratitude for Takauji's investiture. The second letter, written by Kiyoko from Kyoto just four months prior to her death in 1342 (Kōei 1.8.13), is addressed to her nephew, Uesugi Tomosada 上杉朝定 (1321–1352), head of the Uesugi house and provincial governor of Tanba at this time.³⁹ In this correspondence, Kiyoko reminisced about her birth and growing up in the Uesugi domain, the influence of Kōfukuji on her Buddhist faith, her desire to designate the temple an *ujidera* 氏寺, and her desire to transfer the ownership of the land rights from Imanishi, located in the Yakuno district of Tanba, to Kōfukuji.⁴⁰

These two letters indicate that Kiyoko's land holdings were extensive and suggest that she had inherited them from her natal family.⁴¹ Although the Muromachi law codes relegated mothers to insignificant roles within the formal family organization and necessitated greater economic dependency on their husbands, women developed various

35 Takauji's interactions with Iwashimizu Hachimangū date to 1335 when he first offered prayers there for divine power in ruling the realm after parting ways with Go-Daigo; later, his son, Yoshiakira, would further reinforce Ashikaga involvement with the shrine by granting additional land rights to Iwashimizu for "stability in the realm and [Ashikaga] prosperity." Conlan 2003, p. 171, note 24.

36 See letter dated Kenmu 5 (1338).5.27 at <http://komonjo.princeton.edu/shoguns-mother/>. I am deeply indebted to Thomas Conlan for providing a translation and interpretation of this letter.

37 Akiie died at the battle of Ishizu on 5.22, five days before Kiyoko's letter was written. See Niigata kenshi hensan iinkai 1981, pp. 528–30, cited in Conlan 2011, p. 59, note 52.

38 Information about the letters can be accessed online at http://ayabe.citynews.jp/04fmwalk/04fmwalk_3.htm. *Ankokuji monjo* contains many documents related to Kōfukuji, primarily *kishinjō* 寄進状 (documents conveying ownership rights) and *andojō* 安堵状 (documents of confirmation or guarantee).

39 Tomosada was *shugo* 守護 of Tanba, but the meaning of the term changed over time. In Kamakura times, the position indicated a "province-level constable appointed by the bakufu," but later in the Muromachi period came to mean "a provincial military governor appointed by the Ashikaga bakufu" (Mass 1982, p. 295).

40 This second letter documents the complicated process of a land conveyance (*kishin* 寄進) in the mid-fourteenth century, showing how the request for action went from Kiyoko to the head of the Uesugi house, who sent a *jungyōjō* 遵行状 to the estate manager, who then wrote an *uchiwatashijō* 打渡状 to Kōfukuji's head abbot.

41 For details, see *Nanbokuchō jidai no Tanba* 1993, pp. 1–2.

“informal” ways to hold power. Used in this way, land stipends served as one avenue for women to effect change and provide for their afterlife, albeit in an increasingly minor way as the laws changed to allow landholding only for a woman’s lifetime.⁴² Kiyoko seems to have used land transfers primarily to support Kōfukuji, no doubt in part to assure the continuance of memorial services at the temple for her parents and future services for herself and her family. Although we have examined only a small sample of letters, two appear to be “business-type” letters that were preserved by the temple because they documented gifts of land. The other letter that Kiyoko wrote about the battle at Ishizu 石津 and Kitabatake Akiie’s death expressed her observations or those reported to her. That letter probably survived because it was written by the mother of a shogun, and today is in a collection of documents related to the Uesugi held by the Yonezawa City Uesugi Museum (Yonezawashi Uesugi Hakubutsukan 米沢市上杉博物館). As more local repositories digitize their collections, it is likely that other letters will come to light that will enhance our understanding of the scope of Kiyoko’s and other women’s interests and involvement in economic, political, and cultural affairs in the fourteenth century.

Kiyoko’s Death and Posthumous Identity

Kiyoko died at age seventy-three on the twenty-third day of the twelfth month of 1342. Upon her death, Takauji’s archenemy Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354) expressed concern about her passing, saying he feared it would lead to political disorder.⁴³ Although Chikafusa does not explain his statement, his comment suggests that he saw Kiyoko as the lynchpin in maintaining good relationships between Takauji and Tadayoshi. At the time of her death, although Takauji held the title of *seiitai shōgun*, governmental affairs were still far from settled and Chikafusa’s statement acknowledges the crucial role Kiyoko had played in mediating affairs between her two sons, a role far greater than understood to date.

Kiyoko’s funeral was held at Tōjiin, the Ashikaga temple in northern Kyoto, and the site where she had taken Buddhist vows. Her death was recorded in over a dozen contemporary sources, but they include few details about her funeral or how her remains were treated. We know only that the monks who officiated were associated with Rinzaï Zen temples, there were offerings of incense and flowers while monks chanted sutras, and her body was cremated.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, we can learn important facts about Kiyoko from records written after her death. For one, she had many names—some used during her lifetime and others bestowed upon her later. If we look closely at these names, we see that they connect her to specific individuals and sites in a way that effectively constructs a posthumous identity for her. For example, she is seldom referenced by her given name, “Kiyoko,” except by the modern annotators of these texts. Rather, she is most commonly identified as “Takauji’s mother, junior rank third grade, of the Uesugi clan,” signifying that her social importance rested on her position as the mother of a powerful man, an award of high court rank, and the importance of her birth family, in that order.⁴⁵ A number of other references serve more as

42 Tonomura 1997, p. 163.

43 Kitabatake Chikafusa, pp. 565–66.

44 Details of three Buddhist sermons that were given during her funeral are recorded in *Eidan butsujī shū* 英壇仏事集, but the text has little to say about the funeral itself; DNS 6:7, pp. 468–71.

45 See references to her many names in Kōei 1.12.23 in DNS 6:7, pp. 462–80.

honorific identifiers than names and are applied broadly to elite women in the medieval period, not only to Kiyoko, such as Ōkata dono 大方殿, a term used to refer to the senior female in a family; it is a general term used to indicate status. A variation of that phrase, Ōkata Zenni 大方禪尼, identifies the recipient as a senior female who has taken Buddhist vows.

Among the more specific appellations that augment our picture of Kiyoko and her posthumous identity are Jōmyōji dono 浄妙寺殿, Tōjiin dono, and Nishikikōji dono 錦小路殿. All speak directly to the Ashikaga lineage in which she participated through marriage and the births of her children. They articulate Kiyoko's connections to her husband and two sons, as well as to specific sites that were important during her lifetime. The first two names are derived from temples that were closely associated with the Ashikaga; the third is an area of Kyoto. Jōmyōji is a Zen temple located in Kamakura and the site of Kiyoko's husband Ashikaga Sadauji's 1331 funeral and interment.⁴⁶ Jōmyōji dono was one of Sadauji's posthumous names, but when Kiyoko died eleven years later, the name was transferred to her, solidifying her connection to and identification with her husband (and the Ashikaga) in death.⁴⁷ In addition to highlighting familial links and creating identities for posterity, this practice of passing along names also served as a way for family members to remember those who had died. Tōjiin dono was Kiyoko's original posthumous Buddhist name, likely bestowed by Kosen, who had received her vows there. The temple had been founded under Ashikaga patronage and was the site of regular offerings and Buddhist memorial services for Kiyoko, and later Takauji. While Tōjiin dono was first Kiyoko's posthumous Buddhist name, a decade later it was given to Takauji when he died, and Kiyoko's Buddhist name was changed to Kashōin dono 果証院殿.⁴⁸ The transference of Kiyoko's posthumous Buddhist name to her son Takauji confirmed their mother-son bond in the next world, just as the transference of Sadauji's name to Kiyoko linked her to him. Nishikikōji dono is a name that early on was associated with Kiyoko's second son, Tadayoshi, because he once lived in that quarter of Kyoto.⁴⁹

It is not always clear how or why posthumous names moved from one person to another or who was responsible for the process. But in general, a Buddhist master typically conferred a Buddhist name when an individual took Buddhist precepts, and it was common for the immediate family of the deceased to request this same priest or a priest of the family temple to bestow the posthumous Buddhist name. Posthumous names were also requested from other high-ranking monks. For example, another name recorded for Kiyoko, Settei Zenni 雪庭禪尼, appears in a record titled *Sesson oshō goroku* 雪村和尚語録.⁵⁰ The first character of the name may have come from the record's author, Sesson Yūbai 雪村友梅 (1290–1346), a Rinzai Zen monk who studied with Issan Ichinei 一山一寧 (1247–1317) around 1300 in Kamakura at Kenchōji 建長寺, and then went to study in China for almost thirty years. Upon his return, he became a well-known Gozan poet whose poems are

46 The temple became one of the five Kamakura Gozan Zen temples and the main Ashikaga *bodaiji* in Kamakura. For details of the death anniversary rituals performed there for Sadauji, see Stavros 2010, p. 11.

47 After Sadauji took the tonsure, he was given the Buddhist name Gikan 儀観, but after his funeral at Jōmyōji, he was most often referred to as Jōmyōji dono.

48 Entry for "Uesugi Seishi" in *Kokushi daijiten* (online).

49 The area is only a few blocks south of the Ashikaga compound at Sanjō Bōmon 三条坊門.

50 Kōei 2.10.12 in *DNS* 6:5, p. 600.

collected in an anthology titled *Mingashū* 岷峨集.⁵¹ After serving at several other temples, in 1340 Yūbai was invited by Takauji to take up residence at Manjūji 万寿寺 in Kyoto.⁵² Because of his renown as a poet, Yūbai may have known Kiyoko through poetry circles or perhaps through his contacts with her sons. Kiyoko's many names, used both during her lifetime and after death, suggest that both immediate family members and Buddhist priests were involved in their selection. Such a plethora of changing and overlapping appellations certainly complicates our ability to trace individuals in medieval texts as, for example, Tōjiin dono might refer to either Kiyoko or Takauji, depending on the record's date. It is clear, however, that providing multiple names was intended to solidify and display important secular and religious relationships, much in the way that we make those links today by naming children after parents or grandparents.

Other names for Kiyoko appear in texts written or edited in much later periods, making it instructive to follow the construction of her identity beyond her own time. For example, the record of Kiyoko's official natal clan lineage, *Uesugi keizu*, probably written in the fifteenth century, highlights her Ashikaga connections by referring to her as Jōmyōji dono Settei Ashikaga Ōkata dono 浄妙寺殿雪庭足利大方殿, and also noting that her honorific Buddhist name was Kashō-in 果証院.⁵³ By the time the Uesugi genealogy was written and collated in the fifteenth century, the social prestige of the Ashikaga far outweighed that of the Uesugi, and Kiyoko's affiliations with the Ashikaga were considered an asset that the Uesugi were proud to highlight. On the other hand, *Zokushi gushō* 続史愚抄, a product of the late-eighteenth century, ignores Kiyoko's ties to the Ashikaga shogunate and emphasizes her court ties, calling her Fujiwara Ason Kiyoko [ni] 藤原朝臣清子 (尼), or Lady Fujiwara Kiyoko [Nun].⁵⁴ By that date, shogunal ties of any sort may have lost their usefulness, so the original roots of the Uesugi within the prominent Fujiwara noble house were stressed instead. Further study is needed of how women are "named" in historical documents, a topic that has great potential to yield interesting perspectives on how women's identities were constructed and reconstructed over time.

Information about where Kiyoko's remains were interred is inconclusive. Some scholars think that they are in Tanba because her memorial tablet is kept at Kōfukuji, as is a stone grave marker, lined up next to one for her son, Takauji, and another for his wife, Akahashi Nariko 赤橋登子 (1306–1365) (see figure 4).⁵⁵ But the presence of tablets and grave markers is not a reliable indicator of where someone's remains were laid to rest. Memorial tablets are placed in Buddhist temples, sometimes more than one, associated with the deceased's religious beliefs and located near family so that offerings can continue for many years. None of the records, however, confirm that an *ihai* 位牌 was made for Kiyoko after her death, and there is no tablet for her today at Tōjiin. Because written references to *ihai* are rare before

51 Imaizumi 2012, pp. 22–24; also *Encyclopedia of Japan* (online).

52 Entry for "Sesson Yūbai" in *Kokushi daijiten* (online).

53 *DNS* 6:7, p. 472. For more on the compilation of military lineages, see Minegishi, Irumada, and Shirane 2007. Titles ending with the character "in" 院 were given only to people of high rank, generally individuals who made notable contributions to their families, temples, or society. "In" was initiated for retired sovereigns, who were referred to by the name of their retirement residence after abdication.

54 *DNS* 6:7, p. 464.

55 Matsuzaki 1990, p. 48.



Figure 4. Grave markers for Takauji (L), Kiyoko (C), Nariko (R). Ankokuji (Kōfukuji), Ayabe City. Photo by T. Masuzaki. <http://www.ayabun.net/bunkazai/annai/ankoku/ankokuji.htm>.

the latter decades of the fourteenth century, it is likely that Kiyoko did not have one at the time of her death and that the tablet currently at Kōfukuji was placed there at a later date.⁵⁶

Gravesites are equally ambiguous markers of where someone was buried, because it was common practice among the military elite at this time to divide the deceased's cremated remains and inter them in several graves in different locations. The second Ashikaga shogun, Yoshiakira 義詮 (1330–1367), for example, left some of Takauji's remains at Tōjiin and distributed others to Tadanoin 多田院 in Settsu, Kōfukuji in Tanba, and Mt. Kōya's An'yōin 安養院, and also had a memorial tablet for his father dedicated at An'yōin.⁵⁷ Because we know that Kiyoko's funeral was held at Tōjiin, most scholars assume she was buried there.⁵⁸ Many secondary sources say Kiyoko's grave is at Tōjiin, but no fourteenth-century document confirms that a marker was placed there; nor is there a grave for her at the temple today, although Takauji's grave marker is identified for visitors. As Tōjiin was an Ashikaga temple, Kiyoko's remains may have been interred there temporarily after the funeral, but then moved to her natal family temple in Tanba. Indeed, an entry in *Ankokuji monjo*, dated 1414, tells us that Yoshiakira ordered his father's remains divided (*bunkotsu* 分骨) and moved to Tanba, and that he commissioned stone markers for both his father (Takauji) and his grandmother (Kashōin dono Settei [Kiyoko]) to be placed near the founder's grave at Kōfukuji.⁵⁹ This suggests that Kiyoko's remains, or at least some of them, were interred in Tanba, and the text is clear that a gravestone was made for Kiyoko at Kōfukuji in the early fifteenth century.

56 See Gerhart 2009, p. 165.

57 Enbun 延文 3 (1358).6.29 in *DNS* 6:21, pp. 922–23.

58 Stavros (2010, p. 19), for example, states, “the shogun [Takauji] insisted that his mother be buried at the original temple of Tōjiin in Kinugasa.”

59 *Ankokuji monjo* for Ōei 応永 21 (1414).11.20, written several decades after Yoshiakira's death; *DNS* 7:20, pp. 419–20. For a photographic reproduction of Yoshiakira's official decree (*migyāsho* 御教書) regarding his father's remains, see Uejima 2001, vol. 2, p. 105.

Various official directives were also issued upon Kiyoko's death that highlight her importance in the realm and affected both court ceremonies and the daily work of the bakufu. It was typical to cancel or delay government business, festivals, and rituals for a number of days after the death of a high-ranking individual to avoid death pollution. This was a protocol first associated with the sovereign and the court, but one later adopted by the military elite. It allowed those who had been exposed to pollution through the death of a family member to avoid coming in contact with others and gave them time to mourn. Thus, on 1342.12.26, three days after Kiyoko died, a royal directive (*inzen* 院宣) was issued to halt for thirty days litigations (*zasso* 雜訴) that were dealt with by the bakufu, thereby allowing those individuals to stay home.⁶⁰ Because Kiyoko's death occurred just before the New Year, the traditional flute music and dancing that usually accompanied the New Year's White Horse Festival (*aouma no sechie* 白馬節会) at the palace were also said to have been canceled.⁶¹

Although the seven Buddhist offering services typically held during the first forty-nine days (seven weeks) of mourning after death were performed for Kiyoko, we have the most information about the fifth service on the thirty-fifth day after her death.⁶² On that day, Takauji ordered priests from a number of temples to chant one thousand sections of the *Sutra of the Lotus of the Wonderful Dharma/Light* (*Myōhō renga kyō* 妙法蓮華經) for an entire day and copy the *Garland Sutra* (*Daihō kōbutsu kegon kyō* 大方廣華嚴經), and he also ordered a portrait (*zue seizō* 図絵聖像) [of his mother] to be dedicated that day. The term "*seizō*" refers to a portrait of an extraordinary individual, usually a "son of heaven" or, in later eras, a Christian saint, but here it indicates a portrait of Kiyoko.⁶³ Unfortunately, as far as we know, no portrait of Kiyoko has survived, but the one mentioned on this day and others like it would have been hung during offering services on her annual death anniversaries. We are told that the Chinese Rinzaï Zen monk Zhuxian Fanxian (Jp. Jikusen Bosen 竺仙梵僊, 1292–1348), who recorded this information, gave the sermon at this memorial service. Jikusen had also officiated a decade earlier (1332.9.5) at the second-year death memorial for Kiyoko's husband at Jōmyōji in Kamakura.⁶⁴

On Kiyoko's second-year death anniversary, an "eye dropping" *tengan* 点眼 (also "eye-opening" *kaigan* 開眼) ceremony was performed for a new Jizō Bosatsu 地藏菩薩 image that was dedicated at Tōjiin on Kiyoko's behalf.⁶⁵ A Jizō image was chosen because when she became pregnant, as discussed earlier, Kiyoko had established a special connection to the Jizō at Kōfukuji and believed it had aided her in safely delivering an heir. Kiyoko passed on her affinity for this deity to Takauji, who was known to carry a small Jizō image tucked

60 DNS 6:7, pp. 475–76.

61 DNS 6:7, pp. 543–46. This festival was one of the annual ceremonies for the court. On the seventh day of the New Year, the emperor would go to the Burakuden or the Shishinden to view twenty-one white horses led by officials.

62 See *Jikusen roku* 竺仙録 in DNS 6:7, p. 466.

63 In the mid-1300s, portraits of the deceased were typically made after the funeral, but before the second-year memorial. In Japan, the year of death is calculated as the first year, and one year after death is considered the second year anniversary (Gerhart 2009, p. 39).

64 In 1341, Takauji and Tadayoshi invited Jikusen to move from Kamakura to serve as the abbot of Nanzenji. Collcutt 1997, p. 281.

65 A small carved Jizō is enshrined today as the *bonzon* in Tōjiin's Reikōden 靈光殿, but the temple identifies it as Takauji's "*nenji butsu*" 念持仏 and attributes it to Kōbō Daishi (ninth century).

inside his armor and who drew countless images of the bodhisattva from around 1349 until his death.⁶⁶ At this same memorial, Kiyoko was also posthumously awarded a promotion in court rank, raising her to second grade.⁶⁷

Although the records are irregular, there is evidence that memorial rituals (*tsuizen butsuji* 追善仏事) were performed on Kiyoko's behalf throughout the country for many years after she died, first by her sons and grandsons and later by both Uesugi and Ashikaga descendants. Details of Kiyoko's seventh-year memorial service on Jōwa 貞和 4 (1348).12.23, for example, confirm that she continued to be remembered with carefully choreographed rituals and special offerings. Beginning on 12.18, five days prior to the service, a *Hokke hakkō* 法華八講 was performed for her at Tōjiji.⁶⁸ This esoteric Buddhist rite consisted of a series of eight lectures on the eight fascicles of the *Lotus Sutra* (two per day). *Hokke hakkō* performances were typically held before memorial services, as they were intended to accrue merit that could be transferred to the deceased. Tōjiji had been the site of prior *hakkō* sponsored by Tadayoshi for his father, beginning on Sadauji's seventh-year death anniversary in 1339 and again in 1344, 1345, and 1347.⁶⁹ This form of Buddhist merit building spread first in the Heian period among Buddhist priests and aristocrats, then to Zen patriarchs, typically as a preface to memorial services.⁷⁰ By the mid-fourteenth century they were also held for warrior patriarchs as a form of public lineage display.

The *Hokke hakkō* for Kiyoko's seventh anniversary marks the first recorded performance of the ceremony on her behalf and is one of only two such services documented for an Ashikaga wife or mother. Thus, the *hakkō* was an important form of recognition for Kiyoko and can be seen as part of a larger agenda to aggrandize the Ashikaga lineage at a time when its continuance was anything but a given, as discord between Takauji and Tadayoshi increased.⁷¹ Five chiefs of staff in the Ashikaga regime (*mandokoro shitsuji* 政所執事) sponsored Kiyoko's 1348 *hakkō*—Sasaki Dōyō 佐々木道誉 (1296–1373), Nikaidō Tokitsuna 二階堂時綱 (b. 1280), Nagai Hirohide 長井広秀 (n.d.), and two others (unnamed).⁷² The *hakkō* for Kiyoko at Tōjiji was clearly a public affair, paid for by officials high in the Ashikaga government and intended to make a public statement.⁷³ As *Hokke hakkō* were attended by a wide range of important people, the rites were calculated to highlight Kiyoko's noble heritage and solidify her position as the “mother” of a long lineage of Ashikaga shoguns.

66 *Inryōken nichiroku*, Kentoku 3 (1372).7.15, in Shimizu 2013, p. 92. For further discussion of Takauji's belief in Jizō, see Conlan 2003, pp. 187–88.

67 Kōei 2.3.4 in *DNS* 6:7, pp. 576–77.

68 *Daijōin kiroku nukigaki* 大乘院記録抜書, *DNS* 6:12, p. 213.

69 See Stavros's (2010, p. 16) discussion of the public functions of the *Hokke hakkō* for Ashikaga Sadauji; also Ōta 2002.

70 See Tanabe 1984.

71 The other *hakkō* was conducted on Eikyō 3 (1431).4.22 for Fujiwara no Keiko 藤原慶子 (d. 1399), mother of both Ashikaga Yoshimochi and Yoshinori, the fourth and sixth Ashikaga shoguns, respectively. See Ōta's (2002, pp. 50–51) extensive summary of recorded *Hokke hakkō* associated with the Ashikaga from 1339 to 1494.

72 *DNS* 6:12, p. 213.

73 Tadayoshi seems to have been behind the *hakkō* for his mother and father, because after his death in 1352 only one other was conducted for Sadauji, in 1362. After Takauji died in 1358, however, *hakkō* were regularly conducted for him instead, suggesting that Sadauji had been replaced; Ōta 2002, pp. 50–51.

For Kiyoko's memorial service on 12.23, also at Tōjiji, according to Nanzenji's 南禪寺 head abbot, Kenpō Shidon 乾峰士曇 (1285–1362), an especially fragrant powdered incense (*nenkō* 拈香) was burned as an offering and numerous priests of high rank attended the service. An image of Shōgun Jizō 勝軍地藏, a form of the bodhisattva usually depicted wearing armor and on horseback that was much favored by warriors, was copied on this day, modeled after one that Takauji himself had drawn, and the sutra known both as *Jōmyō kyō* 淨名經 and *Yuima kyō* 維摩經 was offered.⁷⁴

Kiyoko's thirteenth death anniversary on Bunna 文和 3 (1354).12.23 was sponsored by Takauji at Tōjiin. (Tadayoshi died in 1352.) It was a particularly unsettled time. The forces of the Southern court occupied the capital on the following day (1354.12.24), causing Takauji and Go-Kōgon to retreat quickly to Onjōji 園城寺 in Ōmi Province. The service for Kiyoko reflects this turmoil: it was brief, including only prayers, offerings of incense, sutras read and copied, and special offerings of water (*suiriku ku* 水陸供, also *suiriku e* 水陸会) for the hungry ghosts.⁷⁵

Many decades after Takauji had passed on, memorial services for Kiyoko continued to be held at a number of venues. On 1374 (Ōan 応安 7).12.23, Kiyoko's thirty-third death anniversary, a memorial service was performed at Zuisenji 瑞泉寺 in Sagami 相模 Province (Kanagawa Prefecture), the family temple of the Kamakura *kubō* 公方 and the site of Kiyoko's grandson Motouji's 足利基氏 (1349–1367) funeral in 1367. The second Kamakura *kubō*, Ashikaga Ujimitsu 足利氏満 (1359–1398), and the Kantō *kanrei* 関東管領, Uesugi Yoshinori 上杉能憲 (1333–1378), attended.⁷⁶ Services continued to be held for Kiyoko at Tōjiin in Kyoto as well. For example, the fourth Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimochi 義持 (1386–1428), sponsored a Buddhist memorial service at Tōjiin on her behalf in 1419 (Ōei 24.12.22).⁷⁷ On the previous day, spells from the *Daizō kyō* 大藏經 (Great Collection of Buddhist Sutras), including parts of the *Daijō hifundari kyō* 大乘悲分陀利經 (also *Hike kyō* 悲華經, “Compassion Lotus Sutra”) and *Byaku sangai butchōju* 百傘蓋仏頂呪 (also *Daibutchōju* 大仏頂呪) were incanted and explained.⁷⁸ Thus, seventy-seven years after Kiyoko's death, the descendants of the shogunal lineage that she had initiated with the birth of Takauji continued to pay homage to her memory as their “founding mother.”

Conclusion

Some details about Kiyoko's life can now be clarified. We know that she was born and brought up in Tanba, not in Kamakura, because she herself tells us so. Although we do not have a completely satisfactory answer to the question of where she lived during her marriage to Sadauji, we can say with some confidence that she probably remained in her natal home throughout most of it. As discussed by Hitomi Tonomura and others, marriage patterns were in flux in the early fourteenth century, with traditional *tsumadoi* arrangements (man visiting the wife in her natal home), popular among aristocrats in the Heian period, gradually giving way to *yometori* marriages (wife moving into her husband's home) that

74 *Kōchi kokushi goroku* 広智国師語録, DNS 6:12, pp. 211–12.

75 DNS 6:19, p. 306.

76 DNS 6:41, pp. 360–61.

77 DNS 7:28, pp. 179–80.

78 The latter spell consists of 427 phrases and was believed to be useful in curing illness and driving away maleficent spirits that contribute to illnesses. See Inagaki and O'Neill 1984, pp. 31, 99, 21, and 27–28.

became more the norm under warrior regimes.⁷⁹ In Kiyoko's marriage we can actually see this change in progress, as she seems to have transitioned from one type to another. When she first married, Kiyoko likely remained with her family in Tanba, while Sadauji lived in Kamakura with his primary wife. Thus, the couple seems to have originally followed a *tsumadoi* arrangement. But after the original heir died in 1317 and Takauji was designated to succeed his father, Kiyoko may have moved, at least for a time, to Kamakura to be near her sons, who would have been preparing there for military duties, conforming to a *yometori* pattern.⁸⁰

After perhaps a decade in Kamakura, Kiyoko returned to the Kyoto/Tanba area after her husband died in 1331. This seems a likely move, given the growing turmoil in Kamakura in the 1330s. We are not certain whether she actually lived in Tanba or Kyoto, but there are records, including a letter that she herself wrote, that place her in Kyoto between 1338 and her death in 1342, presumably living with one or the other of her sons. Kiyoko's activities during these years, as well as her funeral at Tōjiin, are documented by over a dozen Kyoto chroniclers, including important courtiers and eminent monks. The attention she received from such illustrious members of society underscores their growing recognition of Kiyoko's significance to the Ashikaga.

But what can we say about Kiyoko's interactions with her sons or her broader impact on the formation of the Ashikaga polity? We still know very little because no records about Kiyoko exist before 1336, when Takauji first formed his new government with the promulgation of the *Kenmu shikimoku* 建武式目, and Kiyoko died just six years later, in 1342. In the years before 1336, it was not at all clear that Takauji was destined to form a new government and most sources documenting those years focus on his military prowess. Thus, during most of her life Kiyoko was the mother of a great general, but barely on the radar of those living in the capital until after Takauji made it clear in 1336 that his intentions were serious. All earlier evidence of Kiyoko's existence, such as the petitions she presented to Kokawadera and Kōfukuji for safe birth in 1305, was brought to light only later, in 1336 and 1339 respectively, when she made donations of thanks to those temples; at that point the reasons for the donations were explicated and the donation records preserved as proof of the gifts. We first see Kiyoko through the eyes of Kyoto chroniclers when she takes Buddhist vows with Kosen Ingen in 1339 and again when she visits Senseimon-in in 1340. Even her siblings, who were staunch supporters of Takauji, were noticed only after Takauji formed his government.⁸¹

Important evidence of Kiyoko's activities can be found in the letters she herself wrote in 1338, 1339, and 1342; more letters may exist, but they have not yet come to light. The 1338 missive places her near an important battle in which Takauji's main enemy at the time was killed. The letters of 1339 and 1342 register her donations of land rights to

79 See Tonomura's (1997, pp. 145–48) discussion of Takamure Itsue's foundational work on marriage patterns in Japan.

80 For an in-depth discussion of early Japanese marriage types in English, see McCullough 1967.

81 For example, in 1336, Kiyoko brother Norifusa 憲房 was killed in a battle at Shijō Kawaramachi while protecting Takauji and allowing him to escape to Kyushu. Her other brother, Yorinari 頼成 (d. 1346), a provincial governor of Sagami and Tango, also supported Takauji by chasing Chikafusa Akiie out of Nara in the first month of 1338. But few wrote about Kiyoko or her brothers until Takauji became sufficiently important to make him of special interest to those in the capital.

Kōfukuji. The donations show that Kiyoko's land stipends enabled her to enjoy a modicum of economic independence and provided for her afterlife. Kiyoko was also involved in court poetry circles in Kyoto; she was recognized as an accomplished poet during her lifetime in the 1337 poetry index, *Waka sakusha burui*, and she contributed a poem to the *Fūgashū* imperial anthology published after her death. Other references to Kiyoko are written and dated after her death and recount her funeral and memorial services, services that became increasingly more important as the Ashikaga dynasty strengthened and later generations of shoguns began to honor her as "the mother" of the shogunal line. In sum, one reason we know so little about Kiyoko's life in her own time is because she was not a person of interest until after Takauji became a permanent presence in the capital.

One subject we would like to understand better is Kiyoko's relationship with her two sons, Takauji and Tadayoshi. Although very close in age and very ambitious, the two seemed to work together while Kiyoko was alive, but after her death in 1342, the relationship deteriorated. Tadayoshi undoubtedly had a lifelong inferiority complex because of his birth order, which relegated him to the role of "younger brother" in his relationship with Takauji, and also because Kiyoko seems to have favored her eldest. In the letter accompanying her donation of curtains to Kokawadera, she paid Takauji the highest compliment by comparing him to the founder of the Kamakura bakufu, Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147–1199), a man he greatly admired and after whom he consciously modeled himself.⁸² After Kiyoko's death, Tadayoshi's insecurities began to display themselves more prominently, particularly after Takauji shifted his favors to the Kō 高 brothers, Moronao 師直 (d. 1351) and Moroyasu 師泰 (d. 1351), in order to utilize their superior battle prowess. Could Kiyoko have kept their sibling rivalry at bay or mediated the fatal rift that developed had she been alive? Even Takauji's enemy, Kitabatake Chikafusa, thought she could have—strong evidence, indeed, that Uesugi Kiyoko played a significant, yet heretofore unrecognized, role in mediating affairs between her two sons.

In this essay, I have examined records written by courtiers and priests, personal letters and poetry by Kiyoko herself, and explored a number of physical sites to help me reconstruct the life of Uesugi Kiyoko. We now know where she was born, where she lived major parts of her life and gave birth, what sorts of activities and people she was involved with in later life, and how she was remembered after death. Taken as a whole, these small but significant pieces of information help us see Uesugi Kiyoko as a formidable woman who persevered through decades of political upheaval, and one who deserves to be remembered.

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82 See Nakamura 1991, p. 252, and *Baishōron*, pp. 139–40.

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